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THE GRAY GOOSE

CONTENTS

- A Flag of Truce
MARTHA M. WILLIAMS
The Face on the Floor
H. O. CUMMINS
The Watermelon Bank
THEODORE STEARNS
Dr. Cantrell
MINNIE S. BAKER



JULY, - 1903.

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VOL. XI.

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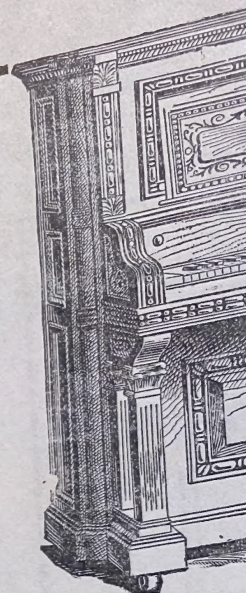
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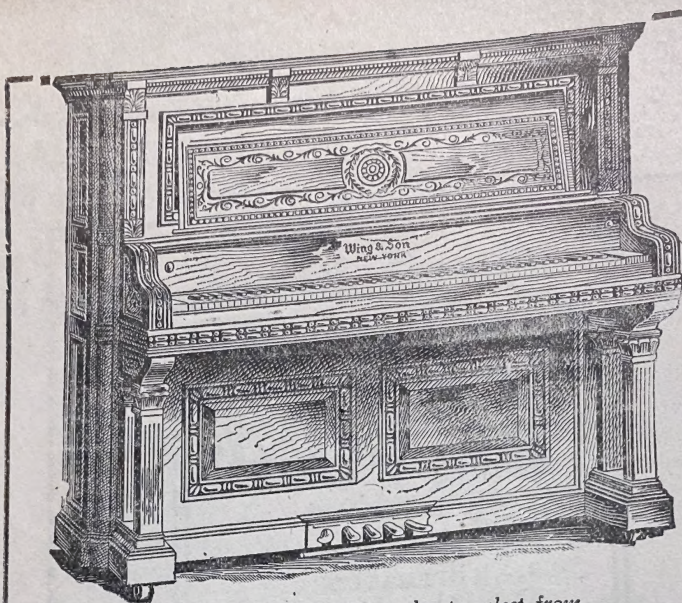
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"Morris, get away, fer God's sake!"

(See Page 19.)

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interfering with yours. All I ask is that they shall be in good taste—"

"You surely don't accuse me of wasting time on ugly women, sir?" Morris said lightly, though his breath came a little quicker. The major laughed again—there was even a twinkle in his eye—as he said:

"No, sir. That is so little a Hilliard trait I should certainly disown a son who showed it. Your river bend flame, Miss Swan Hinton, would do credit to a man of twice your experience. Don't think I mean to lecture you about her, neither about your going with her to river bend parties or chumming with her worthless father, old Nat. He is an entertaining old vagrant. And, Lord, how he can fish! Besides, he is sort of a king among the poor whites. You must get to know them. You must, indeed, know all sorts and conditions of the people you may one day aspire to represent. The proper study of a politician is man. He had better be careful, though, how he mixes it with a study of woman. He cannot, of course, leave the ruling sex wholly out of it. The thing is to study that sex at just the proper angle."

"Thank you for nothing, governor. You've been setting the example that is so much better than precept ever since I was in short frocks," Morris said, gulping his wine. Then he walked to the fireplace and began kicking the Hickory logs which smouldered and sputtered there, though the windows were wide open and the world outside warm and sunlit with the warmth of late May. Major Hilliard, who loved his land and his son with almost equal passion, let his eyes range over the broad acres of his estate, then brought them back to Morris and said in a voice of pity:

"On my soul, I'm sorry for those Hinton girls, handsome enough for duchesses, every one. And then their gift—they truly have music in their souls, yet they would be better off without it."

"I don't know. They love it so. I believe they love, too, the distinction it gives them," Morris said, looking carefully away from his father. "They are proud of being the

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only woman band ever seen hereabout. Then when they play at the balls and the barbecues and fairs of course they are brought in contact with—with better people than their own sort."

"There's the rub and pity of it," Major Hilliard said thoughtfully. "This contact with the better sort will make their own sort distasteful to them. They are big, splendid animals, as soft hearted as they are underbred, as innocent as they are ignorant. I wonder indeed that they can be old Nat's daughters. He is certainly a tough citizen. It must be they take after the mother, who is of decent farming stock. If only her girls were kept quietly at home, it is likely they would marry farmers themselves and be happy ever after; but hawked about as they are they learn to flout the decent youngsters who would make them such excellent husbands. Even that, however, is not the worst. They will end by loving where love may mean ruin."

"Old Nat will not listen to any talk of marriage," Morris said still looking away. "You know he lives easy since the girls bring in so much money."

"I fancy whoever married one of them would marry the whole family," Major Hilliard said. "And that brings me to my grievance. Of course it is ridiculous. I dare say you thought it was only a piece of innocent vaunting on the girl's part, but you should have checked her. Dick Daly tells me at the last party you stood quiet when Swan called herself Mrs. Morris Hilliard. For ourselves it does not matter, but I have a feeling about it. You ought to have remembered that that was your mother's name."

The major was dark, with square jaws, black bleeting brows, a firm chin, a thin lipped, almost cruel, mouth. His son was fair and blue eyed, with a pure Greek profile. He had indeed the face of the mother who had died when he was born, but some subtle inner stirring brought uppermost the race likeness, indefinable, yet beyond mistake. It was a Hilliard of Hilliards who answered, slightly drooping his head as he spoke:

THE GRAY GOOSE

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"I don't forget, sir. Swan spoke the truth!"

"The truth!" Major Hilliard reeled as from a blow, covering his eyes with his hands. Morris' face had reaffirmed his words. After a long minute the father held out his hand, saying steadily:

"At least you show yourself my son. You had the courage not to lie to me. You knew I would believe you against the whole world, even against myself."

"That was why I couldn't do it," Morris said. Major Hilliard reeled again, but Morris did not offer to steady him. The two were comrades, much more like close knit brothers than father and son. The major's very life was bound up in his boy, whom almost from the cradle he had treated as a man and an equal. He had aimed to teach him beyond everything what it meant to have been born a gentleman and a Hilliard, the last of a line of spotless gentlemen. He had no more dreamed that Morris could marry beneath himself than that the sun could drop out of the sky.

"You—must—love—this—girl—very deeply," he said at last, with his eyes on the smouldering fire. Morris set his teeth hard.

"Yes, I love her," he said, very slowly, "and away from her I hate her almost as much. I know all you can say—that she is ignorant, vain, vacuous; that she knows nothing of the reserves and refinements which should belong to—the woman who shall take my mother's place. What is the good of talking, though? I am a man. She is the most beautiful woman in the world, and she loves me. Yes, she does—loves me madly. I might have made her—anything I chose. You have brought me up to know that a seducer is worse than a mad dog, and so I married her. It seemed to me I must disgrace either your name or your training, and I let the name go."

"You did not think of me?" the major said, very low. Morris covered his eyes and groaned.

"Over and over and over," he said. "But look back, governor. Remember what it is to be twenty-two. Fancy

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A FLAG OF TRUCE

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yourself loved and loving; fancy, too, leaving the woman you loved, in the recklessness of heartbreak, to throw herself into the bottomless pit. Swan is loud and gay and free, but she is good. I kept my head until—well, until it happened that I kissed her. Then—well, nothing mattered beside keeping her always and only mine."

Major Hilliard's hands clinched hard upon the arms of his chair.

"Tell me what you mean to do," he said lifelessly.

Morris smiled a dreary smile.

"I have not made a plan, governor," he said, "but be certain of this—I shall not bring Swan here. My mother's memory forbids. Wherever Swan will go, there the tribe of Hinton will go likewise. Perhaps the best thing I can do is to ask you for money enough to take the tribe and vanish."

"By the lord, you shall not! I will not be left desolate. You shall not throw away your life, your future, in this fashion!" the major roared, springing to his feet. "Morris! Morris! Why did you keep all this dark? You are under enchantment, clean out of your mind. I say nothing against this poor girl, but tell me, has the marriage been made public?"

Morris shook his head. "Old Nat suspects, but nobody knows except the minister," he said. "The people at the party thought Swan was only fooling, as she was when she called herself Mrs. Ben Isham. Ben is mad about her, but she will hardly look at him now."

"You are sure of that?" Major Hillsard asked. Morris smiled, half angrily, half confidently.

"Swan would break her fiddle over his head if he even looked love at her," he said. "But tell me, governor, do you mean to disown me? You would be justified in doing it."

"God knows—perhaps—I do not," Major Hilliard said. "But promise me, my son, to keep quiet for three days longer."

* * * * *

The shiftlessness of all the river bend settlement reached

THE GRAY GOOSE

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its flowering in the Hinton house. It was a tumble down log structure just on the edge of the water. There was a low rail fence about it. Where the gate should have been the rails were stretched apart. "Po' whites—they bound ter stick ter po' whites' ways," old Nat Hinton said to Major Hilliard as that gentleman walked through the gap upon the morning after Morris' confession.

Old Nat leaned against the jamb of the big room door, hitching up the single string gallus that supported his patched trousers. He was coatless and had one shoe half off. A stubby black pipe sent up a mighty reek from one corner of his mouth. He had small, shrewd, farsighted eyes. All the lower half of his face was shrouded in a fierce beard that reached nearly to his waist.

"Yes, po' white ways," old Nat repeated. "Them thar fine gals o' mine, now—major, ef they was yourn yer'd ruther see 'em dead 'an earnin' good money jest er ticklin' fiddle an' banjo strings. But they likes it, an' I likes it. Tell yer, 'twould take er heap o' money ef any feller wanted ter buy us outen business now."

"How much?" Major Hilliard asked. He had caught old Nat's drift and felt intuitively that old Nat sensed his own errand.

"Well"—old Nat's tone was reflective—"lemme see. It would take er big pile—yes, sir-ee, er big one. The band's wuth better'n \$200 a year ter me my own self, not countin' whut them air children wastes on thar mammy an fine things fer thar own selves."

"I will give you \$1,000 in hand and \$1,000 a year for life if you'll take them all, go away and never come back," Major Hilliard said. Old Nat laughed provokingly.

"That does sound liberal," he said, "but it ain't, not a-tall. Why, it ain't half the wuth o' the dower right in Wake Forest plantation, not sayin' nothin' about all the money an' niggers."

"My wife is the only person who could claim dower in Wake Forest," Major Hilliard said slowly, "and certainly I

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Spanish guitar. Major Hilliard looked her over with a heart full of murderous compassion. The appeal of her beauty fully excused his son and took away any lingering trace of hardness toward him, yet in so excusing made him all the more determined on rescue. In all his life before he had never willfully hurt a woman. Now that needs must he hurt one he meant to do his best to salve the wound.

"Swan, you love my son?" he asked, looking her full in the eye.

"I—I reckon so," Swan said, fumbling with the ribbon at her throat.

"That is why you don't want him to be poor?" the major asked.

Swan nodded, gulped, then said slowly: "H—Morris—ain't fitted fer that. He ain't no m' fitten 'an a racer's fitten ter be a mule. 'Tain't nice to be po'. I know all about that—"

"No; it is not nice. You don't want to be poor all your life?" the major interrupted. Swan shuddered a little and swallowed hard. Suddenly she flung up her head, her whole face subtly hardened.

"No; I don't want er be po' always," she said, "ner I don't mean ter be neither. Ef I cain't have Morris an' the money—"

"You'll take the money?" Major Hilliard supplemented as she choked and grew silent. "That is very wise. I am glad indeed to find you so sensible."

"I ain't sensible. I am drove ter death," Swan cried, hiding her face in her hands. For a minute gusty sobs shook her whole frame. All at once she dashed the tears from her eyes, dropped her hands and asked, watching Major Hilliard narrowly as she spoke: "Did Morris send yer, er did yer come on yer own account?"

"That has nothing to do with the case," Major Hillard said diplomatically.

"See here. I want figgers. Sentiment's good, but

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gimme dollars an' cents," "dollars an' cents in er lun on. "Yer may come yer s but yer don't come it over

Major Hilliard looked spoken. "I will settle \$1 and never come back to it half as much tomorrow up

"That ain't much f jest er plain likely nigger began. Swan stopped h away in a passion of tear

The house at Wake the Tennessee River, y stream, and Major Hill third year of the civil w stretched far back from smaller village of them were all swept away. I ing and dancing all abo down the broad veranda after them, more in un garb of civilians.

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gimme dollars an' cents," old Nat growled from the door—"dollars an' cents in er lump, er big lump at that," he went on. "Yer may come yer soft sawder over that thar fool gal, but yer don't come it over me."

Major Hilliard looked at Swan as though old Nat had not spoken. "I will settle \$10,000 on you if you leave the state and never come back to it," he said, "and give your father half as much tomorrow upon the same condition."

"That ain't much fer er high toned gentleman when jest er plain likely nigger's wuth fifteen hundred," old Nat began. Swan stopped him with a violent cuff and rushed away in a passion of tears.

* * * * *

The house at Wake Forest stood quite three miles from the Tennessee River, yet the plantation ran down to the stream, and Major Hilliard had his own landing. In the third year of the civil war a village of white tents about it stretched far back from the waterside. There was another smaller village of them up around the house. The fences were all swept away. Horses fully accoutered stood champ-ing and dancing all about the lawns. Men clatte ed up and down the broad veranda steps, some with swords clanking after them, more in undress uniform and a very few in the garb of civilians.

Not one of the original inhabitants remained. Major Hilliard and Morris were both in the Confederate army. Their hundreds of slaves had been sent farther south as soon as the fall of Fort Henry gave the whole river region into Federal control. Now the fortunes of war had made Wake Forest the camping ground and base of operations for a considerable Federal column. Its aim and object were secrets jealously guarded since it was known that Forrest's flying horse, the most dreaded among all the enemy, lay almost in full strength not so many miles away.

General Bruton, the ranking Federal officer, wisely made his headquarters upon the river bank within range of the gunboats, but his chief lieutenant, Colonel Flowtow, who

THE GRAY GOOSE

14

was really the working soul of the column, had quartered himself in the plantation house and from it directed everything that went on. He was not a military sybarite, yet made himself very comfortable there, drinking the good wines in the cellar and smoking the best cigars in the major's own special locker. The camps were both full of black vagrants, contrabands in the phrase of that time. Bruton gave them rations and listened sympathetically to their stories. He had so many of them for servants indeed they were in each other's way. Flowtow hated them, whole and several. Brought up a lieutenant in the German army, he had resigned, come to America, engaged in business, dropped it at the call to arms and gone into the fighting almost purely from the love of fighting.

"They cumber us, these blacks," he said often. "They ruin discipline too. Then how shall you keep army secrets when they go in and out like the air?" But now even he had taken one into his service. It had happened in this wise: Three days earlier he had been reconnoitering when his detachment was charged upon by a single mounted man, riding at full speed and crouching low over the neck of a horse. The reason was plain. Behind came half a dozen men in gray, also mounted, spurring as for life and shooting as they rode. It seemed a miracle that some bullet did not touch the fugitive. The Federal cavalry parted to let him through as soon as they saw his face. He was a mulatto, evidently a camp servant, making a dash for liberty, since he wore over his jeans trousers a cast off gray overcoat.

"Shoot me, please! Don't send me back," he said, riding straight up to the colonel.

Flowtow eyed him a minute, then asked gruffly, "Why did you run away?"

For answer the mulatto flung off his coat and bared his back. It was marked all over with cruel crimson welts. "Nobody ever dared to touch me befo'," he said. "I was a house nigger, and I don't belong to the man that done it."

A FL

"How came you in there?"

The negro looked full of mischief. "I took care of my master's horse, and they tried to make me go, and they tried to make me go."

"Humph! Who is your master?"

"Major Hilliard—the colonel now under old M. I dare to say how I come to know all at Wake Fores'."

"So!" The exclamation was full of meaning. "You may be worth keeping," Flowtow said, pursing his lips. "—he is your father, too."

"I hears 'em say so." "Please, sir, take me to the colonel."

"I may have better luck." "Ride you here beside me, you shall have money and food."

"You try to trap me, then, I'll bite you." "I don't want more money, I want to read and write," the mulatto said. "No nigger can't do that but white folks."

So Yellow Ned came following the colonel listlessly beside the horse, alert for any service, but he had found an old negro at the door had set these he reproduced in the sentries as they came and said one to another simply could not teach that A was not Z.

A FLAG OF TRUCE

"How came you in the army?" Flowtow asked suspiciously.

The negro looked full in his eyes and said: "I went to take keer of my master's son. He—he's dead now. I wanted to go, and they tried to make me stay."

"Humph! Who is your master?" Flowtow asked.

"Major Hilliard—that is, he used to be major. 'He's colonel now under old Mr. Forres'. If he had been there, nobody would 'a' dared to touch me," the negro said. "That's how I come to know all this country so well. I used to live at Wake Fores'."

"So!" The exclamation was one of pleasure. "Then you may be worth keeping, if you will be a true guide," Flowtow said, pursing his lips, then brutally; "This major—he is your father, too, eh?"

"I hears 'em say so," the negro said, looking down. "Please, sir, take me to wait on you. I can cook—"

"I may have better use for you," Flowtow interrupted. "Ride you here beside me a little. If you serve me well, you shall have money and freedom. If," with a stern look, "you try to trap me, then I'll cut you alive into little teeny bits."

"I don't want money, only to be free and to learn readin' and writin'," the negro said. "As to trappin' you, no nigger cain't do that. You are too smart for even our white folks."

So Yellow Ned came to be free of Flowtow's quarters, following the colonel like a dog wherever he went, crouching patiently beside the hearth while Flowtow wrote or talked, alert for any service, but seemingly heedless of all he heard. He had found an old notebook and stub of pencil. The sentry at the door had set him copies of letters and figures. These he reproduced in a thousand unheard of combinations. The sentries as they changed were much amused at his efforts and said one to another Yellow Ned must be crazy—you simply could not teach him that two and two made four or that A was not Z.

THE GRAY GOOSE

It was mid-May four years from the month when Colonel Hilliard had sent the Hintons away. Old Nat had come back very soon after the Federal victory. He claimed indeed to have a mysterious connection with those in authority and swaggered among the other fisher folk as to the vengeance he meant to take on the slaveholding aristocrats who had formerly oppressed him. A year of riotous living had wasted the Hilliard money. Luce and Prude now chose to go their own way, but Swan came with her father because her mother came perforce.

With the wreck and remnant of their sudden wealth old Nat had chartered a trading boat, a miserable scowlike affair which was towed up or down stream as occasion served. Ostensibly it was a sutler's boat. In reality it engaged in all manner of contraband trading. A cotton cargo once safe under hatches meant more profit than many weeks in camp. Old Nat had planned to smuggle such a cargo aboard before the Lucy tied up at Wake Forest landing. He had slipped outside the lines, spying where best to seize it, leaving his wife and Swan in charge of the boat.

Soldier villages gossip even more than ordinary villages. Everything at headquarters is soon the common property of the camp. Thus Swan came to know very soon all the particulars of Yellow Ned's arrival. She pondered what she had heard a day, then just at sunset startled her mother by saying: "I'm goin' over ter the outpost. Funny I never thought o' it before, but there is my chance ter see the inside o' Wake Forest."

There was no protest. Mrs. Hinton never wasted breath in trying to turn Swan from her purposes, but something, she knew not what, made her kiss her daughter once shyly, fearfully; once, as she felt Swan tremble at her touch, out of the fullness of her mother heart.

"I wish I could take yer, too, but that would spoil everything," Swan said, patting her cheek and almost running away. She had rummaged out her old fiddle and put on a short frock, much frilled and spangled, which she had worn

in the days of the neck, so she threw cape, disposing of the very last she took of her bosom, saying what may come in time o' the year.

As she picked there were hails of invitations to supper staid for none of tongue had gained young officer, risked a kiss her in the face nose with the fiddle.

As she came halting her. She discordant bars worse than that. the freedom of no sickness or trouble man of them would for all her freedom easily to Colonel the sentry there at tow himself was at his heels.

"You! What ing her arm in a

"Me? Oh, I Swan said jauntily ter company' had

"What is the Flowtow said, still laugh.

"No! Won't

in the days of the band. It was black and came low in the neck, so she threw over her shoulders a blue artilleryman's cape, disposing one end so the scarlet lining would show. At the very last she turned back and thrust something deep into her bosom, saying with a lazy smile, "Yer don't never know what may come in handy when yer go on a possum hunt this time o' the year."

As she picked her way through the company streets there were hails from every hand—cries of admiration, invitations to supper, banters for a tune, just one—but she staid for none of them. Words she flung back in plenty. Her tongue had gained in license, in piquancy and point. A very young officer, riotously full of beer, ran out and tried to kiss her in the face of all, but was rapped smartly over the nose with the fiddle bow and ran back howling with pain.

As she came to the outpost the pickets made a feint of halting her. She stuck the fiddle under her chin, played three discordant bars and said, "Let me through or ye'll hear worse than that." All the camp knew her. She had indeed the freedom of more than one army corps. She was kind in sickness or trouble, a good comrade in health, square—every man of them would have staked his life on that—and straight for all her freedom, both of speech and action. So she won easily to Colonel Flowtow's door. She would have passed the sentry there as she had passed the others but that Flowtow himself was just coming out, with Yellow Ned, as usual, at his heels.

"You! What do you do here?" he said roughly, catching her arm in a hard grip.

"Me? Oh, I just came ter find out ef yer all were dead," Swan said jauntily. "I didn't know but 'Mr. Forrest's critter company' had slipped in an' made crow's meat o' the lot."

"What is that to you? Women are not for fighting," Flowtow said, still roughly. Swan laughed an airy, happy laugh.

"No! Women are fer kissin'," she said. "I'll kiss yer,

Colonel Flowtow, an play yer a tune inter the bargain ef yer'll do just one little thing I want."

"Oho! I am to be bribed—in face of the articles of war!" Flowtow roared. "Well, bribe me, Swanchen. I will hear what it is about—afterward."

"Yer shall take the tune first," Swan said, throwing off her cloak and setting the fiddle between her chin. Before Flowtow could protest she had struck up, "Run, Nigger, Run!" looking as she played straight at Flowtow's new servant. Without a break she glided into another strain, almost an improvisation, full of swelling chords and soft, wailing minors. She had played it first upon her wedding night. Morris had snatched the bow from her hands and had dragged her breathlessly away with him to find a minister.

"My kiss! I cannot wait!" Flowtow said, clutching her bare shoulder. "Many things impend, Swanchen. Pay now—good measure, mind. When they are settled, I will hear what it is thou hast paid for."

"But maybe yer'll be dead. Mr. Forrest is a bad man, a mighty bad old man," Swan said, fending her lips. Flowtow pushed her hands aside and took a long kiss. The next second a stunning blow stretched him full length upon the floor. As he sprang up, livid with rage, he saw Swan struggling violently with the mulatto, who was gasping and had the blazing eyes of a panther.

"Oh, yer Dutchman! I never thought that little love pat would knock yer down," she cried. "But look at this nigger, will yer, tryin' to murder me? Must be he thinks ye're like his white folks—too good ter be touched by the common sort. That's whut all the hightoned niggers think. I know. I used ter live down south. Where did yer skeer him up, Dutchy? Did yer have him made special fer yer guardian angel?"

"Come again, wild Swanchen, and you shall hear!" Flowtow said. "Or, wait! I shall come back before the midnight. We shall drink together and have much games, and you shall play. As for the man, I shall send him to com-

pany with his manners,"

"Ho! I'll as Flowtow gall the veranda. T that very short she flung down sniffing vigorously feel it in my b

She darted laughter, but she had reached the man stand sake! Old man see Flowtow t n't yer keep q Yer have boug

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pany with his horse. The darkness shall teach him better manners,"

"Ho! I'll teach him myself!" Swan said to the sentry as Flowtow galloped off, stepping past him to the edge of the veranda. There she began to play gay, rollicking tunes that very shortly drew all the idlers about her. Presently she flung down her fiddle, whirled about on tiptoe and said, sniffing vigorously: "Wait till I come back, everybody. I feel it in my bones that there's things ter drink close by."

She darted away, followed by a chorus of uproarious laughter, but she did not seek the cellar. In half a minute she had reached the picketed horse and was whispering to the man standing beside it: "Morris, get away, fer God's sake! Old man Nat will know yer. He is comin' here ter see Flowtow this very night. That was why I—oh, why didn't yer keep quiet? What did er kiss more or less matter? Yer have bought yer freedom."

"Some things one cannot buy," Morris said, breathing hard. "Swan, I shall stay until you agree to go with me."

"Yer are crazy—crazy as er loon!" she cried. "First ter come here; then all those papers—I know whut they are. So will old man Nat. He taught yer, remember, the Murrel clan cipher, so yer could write all sorts o' things ter me. Go away, I tell yer. Flowtow will hang yer at sun up as sure as he finds out how he has been fooled."

"If you will come with me," Morris said, springing into the saddle and holding out his arms.

Swan thought a minute, then waved him down. "I must ride an' lead yer with a halter," she said, "or we shall never get past the pickets. I will say I'm drivin' yer out o' camp, back ter yer own side, because I hate yer. Then when we are outside—"

"You will have to keep on," Morris said doggedly. Swan shivered faintly. "We will settle that as happens," she said.

* * * * *

"You are my wife still. I will never let you go back,"

Morris said when the last picket was 200 yards behind. Swan had slipped from the saddle and was unbinding his hands. She had driven him unmercifully, flourishing a silver mounted derringer above his head. The pickets had laughed at her, but had not tried to stop her. It was only one of Swan's freaks, and Swan in their eyes could do no wrong.

The two halted in a broad clear road. The moon shone so bright it was nearly as light as day. As the last knot came loose there was a stir in the bushes at the roadside. Old Nat's ambling mule sprang through them, and old Nat himself cried: "So yer've been er-spyin'—eh, Morris—an' yer wife's helpin' yer out? Mighty nice game, but I'll block it, though I can't stop yer now. I owe yer father er day in harvest. I reckon the time's comin' when I can pay in full."

The last words came faint. He had set the mule off in a headlong gallop. Morris sprang into the saddle, leaned down and snatched Swan up before him. She tried to writhe out of his arms. In three minutes at most the mounted pickets would be after him. How could he escape with his horse doubly weighted?

"Be quiet! Give me that pistol!" he said, his mouth close to her ear. "Weight! You don't know Black Douglas as I do. They could not catch him jaded. Tonight he is a wild horse. He has had nothing but little niggling trots since his run the other day."

"There! I told yer they were comin'!" Swan cried as they caught the sound of shots behind and of hoofs gathering in volume. Morris laughed grimly and shook his reins. Black Douglas knew what that meant. He went away at a long stretching gallop that quickened into the plunging full run. His head was low; his stomach almost touched earth as he stretched himself in long leaping bounds. Now and then he snorted disdainfully. Once there was a keen whinny of defiance.

"Blood tells. He knows it is a race," Morris said, patting the satin shoulder. With one arm he held Swan close

against his breast. He told on the gallop behind. Morris's nose a minute ago was lying down a cross

"There is no breath. "Hold to our lives."

He had neit the speed and co ed the reins gen glas reared as he along the road, He shot past the men were 30 yad after him. The speed. So did th

Flowtow wa been ridden har forward, urging speed of all but emptied their volver, but the nized Swan as s tear her bodily him.

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He gained in front. He

against his breast. Her weight, thus over the withers, hardly told on the gallant beast. They had left the chase a mile behind. Morris was about to pull up and turn Black Douglas' nose a minute to the wind when they heard sabers jingling down a cross road a hundred yards dead ahead.

"There is Flowtow himself," Morris said under his breath. "Hold tight, Swan. Now we have got to ride for our lives."

He had neither whip nor spur. He must trust solely to the speed and courage and intelligence of his horse. He flicked the reins gently and gave a soft low whistle. Black Douglas reared as he heard it, then lunged forward and tore along the road, devouring it as flame devours dry stubble. He shot past the crossroad's mouth while Flowtow and his men were 30 yards away from it. They cried halt and fired after him. The shots only urged him to keep at his best speed. So did the thunder of their hoofs behind.

Flowtow was nearly as well mounted, but his horse had been ridden hard before the chase began. Still, he pressed forward, urging his gray with whip and spur, beyond the speed of all but two of the best horsed troopers. They had emptied their carbines without effect. Flowtow had a revolver, but the range was too great. Besides, he had recognized Swan as she flew past and yearned to overtake her and tear her bodily from the arms of the man who had tricked him.

Rage over the tricking wholly swallowed up apprehension. He knew the chase led him straight toward the Confederate lines. On, on he rode, the wind singing in his ears, his eyes fixed in straining gaze on the space between him and his quarry. It had lessened. In a little while he would come up with the black, would taste the savage sweetness of vengeance. They could not a second time escape him, those audacious ones. He could not doubt now that the woman had been full partner in the scheme.

He gained on them swiftly. They were just 30 yards in front. He rose in his stirrups to cry halt after them.

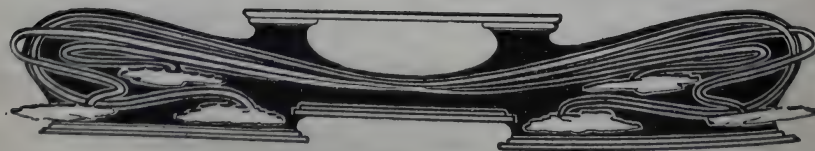
THE GRAY GOOSE

But the cry was drowned in a louder noise, the blurring boom of cavalry guns heavily charged. The flash came straight in front a little way down the road. Undervoicing the sound, he caught the stifled murmur of many men springing suddenly to arms. It was not a picket post but a van-guard he had surprised. Wrathfully he fired his six shots in the air, then wheeled and rode for life toward his own camp.

"Morris! Oh, thank God we didn't touch you!" the captain of the guard said as Morris leaped from Black Douglas. Morris had no word for him. Swan lay inert in his arms, and he felt her head drop prone against his shoulder and knew that the bullet which had stilled her heart was intended for his own.

The next day but one Colonel Hilliard walked into General Forrest's headquarters to say: "My dear general, please send in a flag of truce. My son's wife has died very suddenly. We wish to bury her at Wake Forest beside his mother."

As he spoke, so it was done.



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The Face on the Floor.

BY H. O. CUMMINS.

Author of Welch Rarebit Tales, etc.



IT IS very damp."

"It will be the cooler for that."

"The noisy children of the sons of swine who dwell on the right hand and on the left will annoy the sahib."

"My sister has five little brats. These can be no worse."


"A mother cobra and her young dwell underneath the doorstep."

"They shall be driven out within an hour."

"The furniture is old and much worn, and in no way fit for the rich son of a great man."

"I have seen poorer."

"A stranger from Persia and a high caste Buddhist have both been murdered within the bungalow, and an English doctor with glass windows on his eyes killed himself there for fear. No man can sleep within and live, sahib, because of the strange things which are seen and heard after the smell of night comes over the land."



"Enough of this nonsense, Zuka Khan. I am determined to move into the old bungalow by the baker's oven today, and, mark you this, you usurer, I shall write to my paper which the governor reads, and if any harm comes to me while I dwell in your house, you will be tied up like a bundle of dried herbs and lugged down to the river to answer for it, and will never see your house or your friends of this dirty little village again. I will pay you a month's rent in

advance because I do not want you to be tempted to try to get money from me in any other way."

"It shall be as the sahib wills."

The second night of my stay in Mubarakpur, after a long ride in the cool of the evening, I came home about eleven o'clock, and after stalling the mare, and having a pipe on the doorstep, went to bed. The inspector had some days before sent a request for a detachment of troops to be employed in discovering two Englishmen who had been missing for some time, and I wanted to be on hand in the morning to see the effacement of one more native village, which event would most certainly take place, that worthy declared, if the hillmen still refused admission to his men.

To the best of my knowledge and belief I dropped asleep almost instantly. At least I have no remembrance of being kept awake by any sense of uncanniness connected with the room.

How long I slept I do not know. Neither can I tell what awakened me, but instantly on opening my eyes there came over me, not a chill of dread, but something of a warmth of companionship as though a friend had arrived unexpectedly and I was about to greet him cordially. I sat up in my hammock and glanced about the room. The moon was half way between the zenith and the horizon and its light streamed in at the western window and formed a bright rectangle on the floor of the room, the corners of which were inky dark, as all the windows were covered with thick vines save the little one in the opposite wall. As I gazed the hair stiffened slightly on my head and a cold sweat started out on my forehead, for, vignetted on the floor in the center of that patch of light was the pale smiling face of a woman.

It may not seem much to you that the moonlight coming through a window of peculiar design should take on resemblance to a face, but remember that it was nearly twelve o'clock at night, a time when the creaking of a board in the next room conjures up to an excited imagination the creeping footsteps of an assassin, when every moving shadow

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reminds one of a gleaming knife. Remember also that I had been out all day under an Indian sun, and, above all, remember that the face on the floor was as clearly drawn as if sketched in bold outline by the hand of an artist.

Going to the cupboard I poured out four fingers of raw brandy, and then went back to have another look at my companion of the bungalow. I confess I was frightened. The sensation of warmth had left me and something akin to terror took its place. I could not lift my eyes from the face, and as I looked it seemed to smile again slightly. The lips and eyes certainly moved and even as I gazed the pale smile faded away and was succeeded by an expression of hopeless pain.

As I looked in rapt attention the face changed from front view to profile and the lips trembled as though trying to speak. Again the face varied its position a little and seemed to be looking straight toward me.

I won't swear to it, but that brandy bottle was only half full when I first touched it, so it couldn't have been that, but soon that face did actually begin to talk to me, and I answered it back the same as you would answer any woman who spoke to you. And she inquired who I was and what I was doing in old Zuka Khan's bungalow, and if I was a friend of the nervous, pale little gentleman, who had had the place before me, and who used to stride about the room cursing her, and finally took to shooting into the dark corners with his little toy Colts. Till one night, she wasn't quite sure whether it was an accident or not, for he was waving his arms about and shooting crazy like, he happened to make a little black hole in his own head, right near the temple, and the next day they came and carried him away, and she had been left alone ever since.

As the conversation advanced her tone was still low but grew more vehement. Her voice trembled but I heard her last words as distinctly as I ever heard anything in my life: "Englishmen come here but to die. Go soon or you will remain here always."

As these words were spoken the face turned as though in apprehension at something approaching from behind, and as it did so the voice half moaned, half shrieked: "Too late, O Christ, can no one save?"

Even as I looked dark fingers encircled the shadowy neck of the figure on the floor, and the form seemed to be torn forcibly from its position and hurled noiselessly to one side, leaving me gazing at a pale patch of sickly moonlight on the floor of the bungalow.

It had seemed perfectly natural at the time, that I should be sitting there at two o'clock in the morning talking to a face which all the time stayed on the floor, but the next day I was stiff and lame from sitting up all night, and my head didn't feel right, though I was sure it wasn't the liquor.

The expected detachment for the relief of the Englishmen failed to arrive next day, so I went down to Khyber to see Billy Carahan. Billy was away and I went in and had a long sleep on the rush divan in the living room. He came back about three in the afternoon, and showed me a sketch of a ruined temple he had been making upon the mountain near the village where the Englishmen were supposed to be detained.

I had made up my mind not to say anything to him about my visitor of the night before, but when it came dark and I thought of the smiling face up there on the floor, waiting to talk to me, and the little doctor who had been carried to the Thakur hospital, and died the next night, I changed my mind.

"Caharan," said I, "if you're looking for novel things to paint, you'd better ride back with me to Mubarakpur. I've got a woman up there lying on the floor of my bungalow, who has a face which they say has driven two of the king's officials to drink, and who was the cause of a little English doctor going off his head completely."

"What's the matter, Selward?" asked Caharan, anxiously peering across the table at me. "Been riding too long

in the hot sun, or can here?"

I assured him that, cally, was never better the ten mile ride up her talk.

We reached the I thought I would believe a word I had for him to be cured the thing himself—ing directions to Ud started for the bungalow his hand over his e tried to brace up w in stuttering "bran

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I noticed that soon he pulled him come up from the s folio, which he had and had dropped o side after it was li not enter my sleep front of him, and fear.

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in the hot sun, or can't you get used to the liquor we have here?"

I assured him that my health, both mentally and physically, was never better, and told him that it was well worth the ten mile ride up to the bungalow just to see her and hear her talk.

We reached the bungalow at last near eleven o'clock and I thought I would let Caharan go in first. I knew he didn't believe a word I had told him, and I thought the best way for him to be cured was to let him be convinced by seeing the thing himself—alone. I stayed outside, therefore, giving directions to Udai Peg, to rub down the horses, and then started for the bungalow. I met Caharan stumbling out, his hand over his eyes and his face white and drawn. He tried to brace up when I spoke to him, but only succeeded in stuttering "brandy."

"That's right, Billy," I said cheerily. "Take two or three good stiff drinks, and she will begin to talk to you too."

I noticed that he took several large gulps, and pretty soon he pulled himself together, and told the native, who had come up from the stable, to strike a light and bring his portfolio, which he had slung over his shoulder before starting and had dropped on entering the bungalow. We went inside after it was lighted up, but I noticed that Udai Peg did not enter my sleeping room except holding a bright light in front of him, and even then his knees knocked together with fear.

Caharan unstrapped his portfolio, and got out a stiff board and some pieces of charcoal, but seemed to change his mind suddenly, for he put back the board and kept only the little black sticks. Then he remarked that he supposed I had no objection to his using my bungalow floor for a sketching board, and turned out the light. As he did so he jumped back about four feet and muttered something, for as he looked down he found he was standing directly on the lady's face.

I have always had the greatest respect for William Ca-

haran since the day I saw him face the mob in the Rue des Meurs, after the assassination of President Carnot, but I do not think it took so much real courage to walk through that howling crowd as it did to go down on his knees beside that pale, smiling face and sketch in the outline by the light of the moonbeams from the window.

I stood close behind him watching his hurried labor; of a sudden the figure moved from its first position and exchanged its slight smile for the look of pain that I had observed the preceding night. Caharan jumped so that he nearly fell backwards and I laughed in spite of the gruesomeness of the affair. Caharan cursed softly and waited for the face to resume its former position and expression, which it did shortly. Three times was the work interrupted in this manner and once a low moaning was audible though no words were spoken. At last as the artist was laying in the finishing strokes the figure disappeared entirely, and nothing marred the moonlight square on the floor save Caharan's rough charcoal sketch.

We waited in vain for the shadow to reappear, and after a little I relighted the lamp and drew a light rug over the result of the evening's work. As I did so I thought I heard a slight noise in the outer room, and slipping out there as quickly as I could with the lamp in my hand, I encountered Zuka Khan standing in the middle of the room.

"I only wished to make sure that the sahib was quite comfortable."

"Midnight usually finds a man comfortable if his conscience is clear," I retorted.

"The sahib is a brave man, and the tales of foolish old women do not frighten him."

"No, nor the faces of murdered young women, either."

"God be praised," muttered the native, but his glittering black eyes belied his words as he stumbled out doors and glided across the narrow garden which lay between his own bungalow and the one I occupied.

I returned to the sleeping room and found Caharan sit-

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ting in the hammock with his legs dangling. He was looking very serious and a trifle pale. "Where's the brandy?" he demanded.

I handed him the bottle and inquired, "You ar'n't scared, are you, Billy?"

"Selward, you don't think I'm such a fool as to be frightened because somebody has so manipulated the rays of moonlight coming through a window as to cast the shadow of a woman's face upon the floor, do you? No, scared isn't the word, but there's something about the expression of that face that seems familiar and gives me a peculiar feeling at my heart every time I think of it."

After lighting another lamp and leaving both brightly burning in the room we went to bed. I tried to start a conversation, but Billy only replied in monosyllables, and finally said he was tired, and was going to sleep. I heard him tossing for some time though, and twice he reached over for the liquor which I had thoughtfully brought in and left within reach of us both.

I was awake first in the morning but did not disturb the rug, waiting for Billy to open his eyes, which he finally did with a start and a shiver. After lying quiet for a minute or two to collect his thoughts, he sat up and glanced at the rug spread on the floor, and nodded for me to remove it. I seized it by a corner, tossed it lightly aside and looked at the drawing left revealed. It was roughly yet cleverly executed, and showed the face of a young woman unmistakably English, and with a wealth of hair combed high over her forehead in the style of several years ago. It was a pleasant and rather good looking face, but with nothing extraordinary about it except the manner of its being there upon the floor.

Hearing a peculiar sound in the direction of Caharan, I turned toward him and saw a sight the like of which I hope never to see again. He stood there in the middle of the room swaying backward and forward like a reed in a storm. His eyes seemed starting from their sockets while the pupils dilated and seemingly grew larger and larger as he gazed at

the face on the floor. His hands clenched and unclenched, and great beads of perspiration stood out on his forehead. "Great God in heaven," he groaned. "Selward, that is a picture of my own sister, Alice Caharan. How in the name of Christ, could her likeness come here to this long deserted old bungalow?"

I tried to soothe him by telling him that the resemblance was purely imaginary, but he killed that argument by producing from his pocket a photograph of his sister, and my wonder was then as great as his.

We sat long in silence gazing at the two pictures. I had nothing to offer and Billy seemed dazed. There was the one picture on the floor and the other in my hand with the likeness as uncanny as it was unmistakable. Finally I spoke: "Billy we can't think here in this stuffy room. Let's saddle the horses and ride down to your quarters at Khyber."

His answer was to carefully cover the picture and lead the way to the stable and we were soon on our way down the valley. After waiting long for him to speak I ventured:

"I never knew you had a sister Alice, Billy."

"No we haven't spoken of her much of late years. You see it was this way. Alice was a headstrong girl whose views didn't often coincide with those of the rest of the family, and when she was nineteen she ran away and married a man old enough to have been her father. He was a bank clerk from Liverpool, a fellow of undoubted wit and ability in several more or less uncertain directions, but of his antecedents and previous history we knew nothing. After earning a scanty living for himself and wife in Manchester for a few years, he secured an appointment in the English bank at Colombo. They came out to Ceylon, and we never got word directly from them again. We heard after a time that the bank failed through the rascality of some of its directors, but Alice's husband's name was not mentioned in the printed accounts of the affair, and when I stopped at Colombo a year ago last winter I could get no trace of them."

We rode the rest of the way in silence, and even after

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THE FACE ON THE FLOOR

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our arrival at Billy's quarters, talked but little and arrived at no explanation at all satisfactory. Indeed, after a few hours had elapsed and ten miles of space had intervened between us and the vicinity of Zuka Khan's bungalow, I nearly convinced myself that we had been mistaken, and that the likeness was imaginary. Not so with Billy, and he spent the day in moody meditation.

By nightfall he was utterly exhausted and I easily persuaded him to go to bed and was glad to turn in early myself, and slept soundly, and even Billy was troubled little by accidents to his family tree as he afterward confessed.

The next morning before we were up a native came running with a message from Falkner, the police inspector, that the detachment had arrived and was about to advance on the village. Caharan and I dressed hurriedly, and jumping on our horses rode swiftly to the village, at the far end of which the inspector had quarters. An hour later found us at his door but to our surprise there was not a sign of life about the place. Thinking the detachment must have moved forward without us, I advised hastening on to overtake it, but an idea struck Caharan with great suddenness.

He rode up under the window of the room, where he knew the inspector slept, and called him loudly by name. After a little waiting Falkner appeared at one of the windows and sleepily inquired what the devil we meant by knocking him up at that unearthly hour. To cut a long story short, the detachment had not arrived and was not going to arrive. In fact, the order had been countermanded the night before, for the two Englishmen had turned up safely in a village at some distance.

While I was considering the probable authorship of that message, Caharan turned his horse suddenly and started off up the road at a gallop. I caught up with him and found him muttering angrily about something, but I only caught a word or two, and the object of his wrath was my landlord, Zuka Khan. I could not get him to explain, but

he prophesied gloomily that we had probably seen the last of our lady with the smiling face.

We found the bungalow apparently in precisely the same condition as we had left it on the previous day, but when we came to lift the rug hiding the picture we discovered that during our absence somebody had taken a brush or maybe a handful of rags and metamorphosed Caharan's drawing into a dirty brown spot on the floor.

"The mystery is still unsolved," quoth Billy.

"We must crack Zuka Khan's nut if we expect to get the meat," I replied, "and that probably couldn't easily be done here in his own village. Ah, here comes the baker, who is another of our neighbors. Let us inquire a little as to the antecedents of our landlord."

"Dud Singh."

"Did my father speak?"

"Dud Singh, have you lived long in Mubarakpur?"

"Since my mother delivered me."

"Is Zuka Khan a friend of yours?"

"Zuka Khan esteems himself so much that he wastes little love on his neighbors, and they return only that which they receive and sometimes barely that. Zuka Khan is a Ghoduka and comes from the far south. He is not of our people."

"How long has he dwelt in Mubarakpur?"

"Something over three years he and his wife came to yonder bungalow where they have since dwelt, but his wife is worse than a dead tree for she has borne him no children though she is said to be still young."

"What is his wife like?"

"Zuka Khan is a Mohammedan and his wife remains much at home, never showing herself except with a thick veil, but her eyes are not like the eyes of the women of India."

"It is enough, Dud Singh, you may go."

"Billy," said I, "the household of Zuka Khan will bear investigation. Let us wait until nightfall and then give him a quiet call."

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THE FACE ON THE FLOOR

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"Agreed," answered Billy.

At an hour that evening a little late for a fashionable call, and a little early for a ghost or a burglar, the artist and myself made our way cautiously across the garden surrounding Zuka Khan's bungalow. Billy took his place near the path to the front door, while I crouched and crawled up to a window of the living room. A shutter was drawn, but not too closely owing to the heat, and voices grew more audible as I neared the point of vantage.

During a momentary lull in the conversation, I placed my ear near one corner of the window, but, half prepared though I was, the next words nearly knocked me over. They were in English and in a feminine voice that I had heard before. The voice said:

"Have the Englishmen in the bungalow across the garden gone yet?"

A male voice replied, "No, Alice, they are still there, but our little trick with the old calcium reflecting lantern and the speaking tube has made them nervous enough I think, so that they are not likely to linger long. Once they are out of the way we can push forward our plans for going to America, where the money which I borrowed from the bank at Colombo just before its doors closed, is safely invested. One of these Englishmen is a newspaper man and has a trifle too much curiosity, but I think I can circumvent him, and as we have lived in retirement so long, that little bank affair will never be connected with us anyway."

I had heard enough, and as Billy and I made our way back to our own quarters I was able to tell him all he cared to know. I need only add that neither of us yielded to any weak desire to vindicate the majesty of the law relative to embezzlement and bank wrecking, and the next time I was at Mubarakpur Zuka Khan's bungalow had new tenants; but its neighbor across the garden was vacant and was still pointed at with the finger of suspicion.

The Watermelon Bank.

BY THEODORE STEARNS.



AUNT SAMANTHY had always regarded banks and safe deposit vaults with suspicion and contempt. She had lived alone in the country with Joe and Mandy ever since her husband had been kicked in the stomach by a refractory mule and she distrusted everything and everybody in towns and cities. Joe was an old woolly-headed negro who did the chores and slept in the sunshine. Mandy, his help-meet, cooked and scolded. Both of them were intensely superstitious.

Now when Squire Henderson paid her six hundred dollars for her wood lot Aunt Samanthly was in a fever of apprehension and unrest. To deposit the money in a city bank seemed to her to be flying into the face of Providence, and the modest, yarn-knit stocking which until now had held her butter and egg money, seemed to be equally unsafe. If she trusted one of those banks with her little fortune it would surely be stolen, and everybody put money in a stocking. Thus Aunt Samanthly reasoned and for a week wore the six hundred dollars in a chamois skin bag around her neck, worried to death and ready to jump at the slightest noise. Finally, after much thought, she conceived the brilliant idea of hiding the money in a watermelon. Wrapped securely in oiled paper and shoved into the heart of a plugged melon who on earth would ever be able to steal the money?

Aunt Samanthly is a determined woman and never does anything by halves. Her natural secretiveness led her to send Joe to town on an errand while she could effect the dis-

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posals of the six hundred dollars with absolute safety. At the same time Mandy was started on a wild goose chase after a setting hen which, Aunt Samantha was sure, was down in the willows back of the barn.

Joe saddled the mule affectionately and jogged off to town to buy some thread while Mandy, in growling protest, splashed through the barnyard and "cluck-clucked" in vain for the lost setting hen. Meanwhile, behind closed doors, Aunt Samantha excitedly cut a hole in a large watermelon, shoved the precious sack of notes and coin deep into the juicy interior, and after plugging it up, placed the watermelon under a washtub in the cellar. Then she breathed a sigh of relief, sat down on the front porch, and for the first time in many years, her grim features relaxed into a smile. By the time Joe returned Mandy had discovered that the missing hen was not in the willows and was cooking supper. "Dere wan' no hain da," said Mandy shortly. "No hain gwine aroun' da nohow."

Aunt Samantha's rest was sound and unbroken that night. But just at sunrise she was awakened by a vigorous pounding on her door. "Who's there?" screamed Aunt Samantha. "Me," answered Joe breathlessly. "What's the matter?" she inquired. "Thieves," hollered Joe. "The mule's done gone." "Mercy on us," cried Aunt Samantha, and out she bounded on the floor. Well, the way of it was this: Joe had gone into the barn to feed and talk to the mule and had found the animal missing. Also the cart was gone. All down stairs the house had been ransacked and the absence of the silverware, knives, forks and spoons proved that the burglars were systematic rogues. "Thank heavens I hid the money," said Aunt Samantha to herself. To make sure, however, she went into the cellar followed by Joe and Mandy, and turned over the washtub. The watermelon was not there! Also three hams were missing from the beams, together with two sacks of potatoes. Aunt Samantha sank on her knees gasping for breath. "Mandy," she called faintly, "they have stolen the watermelon."

Mandy clutched Joe violently and her dusky face ashened with terror. "Hit's de debbel," she said. Joe's knees knocked together but he managed to grin foolishly. "Dey done got hungry, I reckon," he exclaimed.

Aunt Samantha got up, dusted the earth from her clothes, and stalked upstairs with her lips set. After breakfast she dressed herself in a plain black gown and briefly commanded Joe and Mandy to guard the premises while she went to town. "But I wants ter fin' that ar mule," persisted Joe sullenly. "Do as I tell you, both of you," said Aunt Samantha and quick as a flash she was out of the gate and plowing down the pike.

When she arrived at Squire Henderson's office she fell into a chair and fanned herself vigorously. "Squire," she said, "I've been robbed of everything I've got in the house." The squire whirled around in blank amazement. "God bless my soul, it's Samantha Peters!" he cried. "Mrs. Peters, if you please," answered Aunt Samantha severely. "Yes, yes, of course," said the squire. "Robbed, you say? Impossible." "Squire Henderson," commenced Aunt Samantha impressively, "when one lives so near town everything is possible. They've stolen my mule, my silver and the six hundred dollars you paid me for that wood lot. The same mule that kicked Mr. Peters," she concluded, covering her face with her handkerchief.

Squire Henderson wiped the perspiration from his forehead and coughed slightly. "Did you—didn't you put the money in the bank?" he asked. Aunt Samantha bristled. No indeed, she hadn't put the money in the bank. If she had it would have been stolen long ago. Sister Francis had put five dollars in a bank once and there had been a run on the bank the very next day. "Busted!" said Aunt Samantha with a snap. Well, the upshot of it all was that the squire learned all about the watermelon, where it had been hidden, and a thousand and one trivial details about the price of thread and the labor it took to knit a yarn stocking.

"There'll be a circus performance here this afternoon,"

said the squire. "how I'll look up with him. I don't Aunt Samantha the circus. For he was unprincipled, and went home."

Joe met her and, seeing the cloudless sky, "gwine ter rain," he said, "Well, Samantha. Joe replied. "Only I'll you ef you keered Aunt Samantha she rapped out and her. As soon as d "meetin'" finery and walking alone Joe wondered if a lost mule, but as f to see was the elep

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THE WATERMELON BANK

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said the squire. "Maybe the burglars will be there. Any-
how I'll look up the town marshal and go over the crowd
with him. I don't see how we could identify them, though."
Aunt Samantha thought very likely the thieves would be at
the circus. For her part, anybody who would go to a show
was unprincipled, and with that she flounced out of the office
and went home.

Joe met her at the side door. He was anxiously scan-
ning the cloudless sky, apparently ill at ease. "Reckon it's
gwine ter rain," he said with an elaborate attempt to appear
indifferent. "Well, what's that t' you?" snapped Aunt
Samanthy. Joe shuffled about uneasily. "Dunno," he re-
plied. "Only I 'lowed as if Mandy an' I was gwine ter ask
you ef you keered ef we could go ter the seercus this evenin'?"
Aunt Samantha snorted. "Well go and be derved to ye!"
she rapped out and the next instant the door banged behind
her. As soon as dinner was over Mandy and Joe, attired in
"meetin'" finery, set off for town, radiant as two children
and walking along at an astonishing rate for their years.
Joe wondered if any animal in the show would equal the
lost mule, but as far as Mandy was concerned all she wanted
to see was the elephant.

The first thing they did upon arriving at the show grounds
was to buy a sack of "ground peas," peanuts some call them,
and a watermelon. These refreshments they dispatched
swiftly and then they hung around in the crowd, looking,
watching, and whispering in awe at the unusual sights and
sounds. When it was time for them to go home to milk the
cow and cook supper, Joe still had fifteen cents, with that he
purchased another melon, deciding to tote it home as a luxu-
rious aftermath to the day of revelry. As they came up the
lane Aunt Samantha was standing on the porch. "Where
did you get that melon?" she demanded. "Bo't it," said
Joe, sheepishly. "Mandy 'lowed as if she wanted one." He
deposited it on the floor of the back shed and when he re-
turned from the barn Aunt Samantha was gazing at it with
troubled interest. Finally she rolled it over with her foot

and then knelt down and examined it closely. Then she gave a little scream and lifting the watermelon to her full height, let it drop. As it shattered on the rough boards an oilskin sack bounded out on the floor. It was the six hundred dollars! "Joe," cried Aunt Samantha, "run to Squire Henderson's office right away. Tell him where you bought this melon and what I found in it. Don't stand there like a looney. Git!"

Late that night, Joe, very mystified, returned on the recovered mule and carrying a bundle of silverware on his shoulder. There was a light in the kitchen when he came back from the stable and Aunt Samantha was impatient, for the negro and the mule had been having a long conversation. "What time does the bank open in the morning, Joe?" asked Aunt Samantha. The negro scratched his head doubtfully. "Dunno, Miss S'manthy," he replied. "Sometime, I reckon." Aunt Samantha eyed him a moment, smiling grimly. "Joe," said Aunt Samantha, "you're a fool."



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"Cantrell, Dr. Cantrell," he replied. "Haven't you of that little back room

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Dr. Cantrell:
Vagabond, Gentleman, Coward, Hero.

BY MINNIE S. BAKER.



HAD been in the neighborhood just twenty-four hours when I first heard of him; and having selected the thriving little county seat as a likely field for a young lawyer, I made a point of getting acquainted as rapidly as possible. So, when the insurance man, who occupied an office adjoining mine, watched him passing out of sight, I inquired who he was.

"Cantrell, Dr. Cantrell," was the half contemptuous reply. "Haven't you noticed his rusty shingle over the door of that little back room, just across the hall?"

"No. I have hardly taken my bearings yet. He does not look like a physician," I added cautiously.

"I should say not. Regular bum half the time. Spends at least one night out of every seven in the lock-up. Pretty good doctor though, they say, when he is sober."

"What is the cause?" I asked, with the heartless suspicion that I might get material for a magazine article; for somehow or other, editors have been kinder to me than clients, and I had preserved harmony with my landlady many a time on the strength of this instead of my chosen profession.

"Family taint. Father a drunken sot. Mother an opium fiend, and there you are." The insurance man evidently held his loquacity in reserve force.

"Good subject for a psychologist, but somewhat out of

my line," I thought ruefully, and the next moment shamed myself for so mercenary an interest in a fellow being.

Two days later I met the doctor on an upper landing. Instantly his hat was off and he held out a small, nervous hand. "Mr. Hinsdale, I believe," he said cordially. "Cantrell is my name, Dr. Cantrell. I am glad to welcome you to our town." His voice was singularly pleasant for a man, and a more innate ease of deportment I have never seen.

I remembered what the insurance man had said about him and wondered if there had not been some mistake.

"Come back to my den and have a smoke," he went on, after I had unhesitatingly responded to his advances.

Now, I have always had a sort of peculiar Indian-like characteristic that forbids my smoking with Tom, Dick and Harry and for an instant I wavered. But there was something so alluring in his unconscious air of well-bred hospitality that I could not refuse.

I wish some of my city friends, who speak of their sumptuous apartments as "dens" could have had a look at this—the only one I ever saw. In one corner stood an old-fashioned bookcase, generous both as to size and contents, opposite was a desk, two or three chairs were scattered about and in the center stood a stove with a small table near by. The rest of the room was cut off by curtains of faded green canton flannel. I learned afterwards that that part was his bedroom.

His cigars were exceptionally good—a friend had sent them from Manilla, he said—and I spent a delightful half-hour. Just as I was leaving a man hurried in without knocking.

"Well, Hayes, what is it now?" asked my host.

"It's Molly, ag'in, sir. The change seems to have made her worse instid of better, and her folks sent a 'phone message over the river for us to come and bring you."

"Good Heavens! man, have they no doctors over there? Why it is at least thirty miles, and the worst drive in the state."

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"I know it, Doc, and I hate to ask you, but Molly and me both would rather have you than anybody else. And—and—it may be the last time."

"Well, well, I can't refuse you. Unsaddle my horse and get a buggy from the livery stable while I put some stuff together. I have to see a man at the mill town at three o'clock so we will drive by there."

I left him to make his preparations, wondering if he meant to collect mileage as well as a fee. Certainly the man who had just left did not look able to pay either.

A few minutes later I was standing on the sidewalk and saw them drive off.

"There goes that miserable cuss on another of his fool errands, I reckon," drawled a loungee standing near. I turned to him hotly, then, remembering that I was a stranger with my living to make, I controlled myself.

"Yes. No wonder he can't afford to own a buggy, wasting all his time on niggers and poor white trash; though after all I suppose I ought not to call it wasted," put in another more kindly voice.

"That's so. And they all worship the ground he walks on," acknowledged the first speaker.

By this time I had developed a vigorous case of knight-errantry on behalf of the pale-eyed, sandy-haired doctor, who was so plainly cut out for a gentleman and yet who seemed to be such an Ishmaelite among his fellows.

As I returned to my office I had almost decided that as soon as I had become better known, I would play off sick just for the sake of showing my confidence in Cantrell.

It was three days after this before I saw him again and then—sure enough, just as the insurance man had said—he was being carried to the lock-up for a "drunk and disorderly." For once I laid aside all thought of policy and hurrying after them I offered to go on his bond, or pay his fine, or whatever had to be done, to release him from his humiliating position.

"It's no use, sir," answered the officer, civilly. "He's got friends here who'd do the same thing, men who have

done it, in fact, time and again, but it don't do him a bit of good. To tell the truth, sir, they are all sorter keeping hands off to see if a little rough experience won't cure him quicker than kindness."

I knew that this was sound reasoning, but then I had sat in his rooms and smoked his cigars and I felt that I must have this one chance to help him. So it was finally arranged and between us we got him up to his den and into the narrow bed behind the curtain. I do not think Eternity will be long enough to make me forget the vigil of that night. The fierceness of his brutal oaths, his tirade against humanity, and later, his utter shame and degradation. Then, because I was a stranger and had shown him kindness, and because he was a hungry-hearted, remorseful man, he told me without a single reservation, the story of his life.

"I thank God, Hinsdale, that I am the last of my name. I thank Him, too, that with all my weakness I have had strength enough to deny myself the happiness of a home. It would have been the making of me, too, I verily believe, but what of those who might have come after me? No, this doubly accursed taint is mine alone and when I die it dies. And I care not how soon that may be."

Presently I got him off on the subject of his work. "But why don't you cater to a better class of practice?" I asked. "Everybody admits that you haven't a superior in town."

"Why should I?" he inquired, with a clear, insistent glance.

I was abashed at my own littleness and felt like shriveling out of his sight. "Oh because—because you could live much better and would be thrown with more congenial people," I blurted out.

"You have just seen how well fitted I am for good society," he returned, with withering sarcasm. "No, I shall stand by my patients. They know all my rottenness and stick to me in spite of it. I had a splendid offer from another state about a year ago which I almost allowed myself to accept—a prophet is not without honor," you know—but

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it is better for me to give my life to these people than for any one else to. There is more or less danger of contagion and the pay is almost nothing. I can afford these risks better than a man with a family could."

What could I say to an argument like that? I resolved, however, that I would do my best for him, no matter how low he might fall, and in the weeks that followed I had the satisfaction of noting a slow, but general improvement. It was evident though, that nothing short of a miracle could ever entirely free him from his deadly heritage.

Men spoke of his skill, his talent, his faithfulness, then shook their heads.

One stormy March evening we were seated in my office when an imperative ring of the telephone bell brought me to my feet. It was a request that I send Dr. Cantrell out to Judge Lawton's at once. The latter was a wealthy Michigan man who had a winter home six miles out of town.

Cantrell was not half as excited over the summons from high quarters as I was. "No use in my going," he muttered, "every doctor in town has been out there today, and I understand they have wired for their home physician as well as Tarleton of Columbia. Anyway my horse is clear fagged out."

The truth was he himself was ill and worn out with constant riding. "If you'll lend me your wheel, though—" he began.

"Lend you nothing," I retorted, as I turned once more to the telephone and ordered a turnout from the livery stable in double quick time.

"Lawton's only son has meningitis. I heard Howard say today there was no chance for him," explained Cantrell as he packed up a queer sort of electric battery that was partly his own invention.

"Then save him and you are fixed for life."

"Which won't be long. I tell you old fellow, my heart has been mighty shaky for the last three days."

He made the fight of his life and his brother physicians told of it afterwards with unstinted enthusiasm. They could

afford to, then. His clear headedness, quickness and miraculous skill saved the boy. And when it was done and they looked at him with grateful, admiring eyes they saw that his own face was livid and his lips already blue. "This is my last case," he whispered hoarsely as they laid him on a couch. He never spoke again, but when I got to him he smiled faintly and held out his hand.

The Lawtons did the handsome thing in the way of a funeral and monument, but to my mind the greatest memorial was the weeping, motley crowd of "niggers and poor white trash" that followed him to the grave.



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